

K. England. — Parl. [Petitions and
(I) Addresses to Parl. — 1700.] 14
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REASONS

Humbly Offered to the Consideration of

Both Houses of Parliament,

AGAINST THE

Exportation of Wooll

OUT OF

ENGLAND and IRELAND.

WHEN a Nation has some Rich and Necessary Materials for Manufacture within it self, exclusive of other Countries, it has the Monopoly of that Manufacture to the rest of the World; and therefore can never be under-sold, but may vend it so as to pay all Extraordinary Charges, with sufficient Gain to the Manufacturer and Merchant.

As Manufacture seems a kind of Debt to the Laborious Part of the People, who by Nature are entitled to Live; so it is the Highest of all Charities, and the most Substantial and Universal: For, What signifies the Distribution of a little Broken Meat amongst a few Wretches, in comparison of this Noble Way of supporting many thousands of Families, which at the same time preserves them from Starving, keeps them from Idleness, and makes them Useful to the Publick?

The Labours of People bestow'd this way, especially when the very Women and Children may get good Livelihoods by it, must necessarily make a Nation a Prodigy of Wealth: For whilst every ones Hand and Head is employ'd, and continually improving one Commodity or other, they work for the Nation wherein they live, as well as for themselves. For if 100000 Manufacturers get 6 *l.* apiece *per Annum*, the Nation must gain or save yearly 600000 *l.* by their Labours, tho' the Materials be better'd onely the Value of their Wages. And if the Number be greater, or Gain more apiece, then the National Gain still encreases more and more in proportion. All which is too evident in the present State of *France*,
and

and the contrary in that of *Spain*, which, notwithstanding the Wealth of the *Indies*, is yet, for want of Home-Manufactures, the poorest and Weakest of all *Europe*, and the most dispeopled.

Wooll was ever held, and still is, the Principal Commodity of this Island; and, if duly look'd after, might be made the Greatest in the World: *First*, Because our Neighbour-Nations, whose *Wooll* is too Course or too Fine to be wrought alone, can make but little Cloth of any considerable Price, without a Mixture of our *English* or *Irish Wooll*: *Secondly*, Because the Materials of the *Wollen Manufacture* are of small Value whilst Raw and Unwrought, at least in comparison of the *Manufacture* when fully Improv'd; which may be made Ten or Twelve times the Value, according to the Workmanship; and consequently, will make a Return of so much more Treasure to the Nation, than the Raw Materials.

'Tis therefore very imprudent, and of most dangerous consequence, to suffer our *English* or *Irish Wooll*, unwrought, to be Exported into Forreign Countries; since this may in time transfer the *Manufacture* it self to Forreigners, and with it the incident Riches and Populacy, because our *Manufacturers* must follow the *Wooll*, to our unspeakable prejudice: And by this means, besides our present Loss of Men and Money, these innocent Materials may at length return in the shape of Armed Men and Ships, to the Terror and Confusion of an Unthinking Lazie People.

These Considerations made our Ancestors very severe against the Exportation of *Wooll*, as appears by the many Laws they Enacted, and the several Methods they us'd for preventing this National Mischief; and His late Majesty of Blessed Memory was no less zealous, who first by His Proclamation, dated 15 Sept. 1660. the better to hinder the Exportation of *Wooll*, granted half His own Moiety of the Forfeitures to all such Persons as would seise any *Wooll*, or Prosecute the Exporters; and when neither this would do, nor yet the great Penalties the same Year impos'd, in the Fourteenth Year of His Reign He made it Felony to Export any *Wooll* whatsoever. Yet notwithstanding, for want of due Care for putting the said Laws in Execution, the Mischief still continues, to the great decay of that Noble Manufacture.

For now our *Wooll* being stoln out of *England*, and therefore sent away Custom-free; and our *Clothes* and *Stuffs* being carried away undyed and undressed, and great Customs being laid on *English Cloth* by our Neighbours, because they get great store of our *Wooll*, very cheap, to make Cloth enough of their own, the *Dutch* and *French* are now our Competitors in this Manufacture, and will in a short time beat us out of it, if speedy Care be not had to prevent the Exportation of *Wooll*: For they have actually beaten us out in the *Northern, East-land, and German Trades*, and share with us in that of *Turkey*; for having found means to get our Midling *Wooll* from *Ireland*, cheaper than the *English Clothier*, and mixing it with their Forreign *Wools*, which are Two thirds cheaper than ours, they make thereof vast quantities of *Course Clothes, Druggets, and Stuffs*, which are acceptable Merchandise not onely to *Spain, Portugal, Germany, and other Countries*, but even to *England and Ireland*.

This,



This, if not timely prevented, will quickly destroy our Forreign Market and Vent of *Cloth*; it has already sunk the Value of our Raw *Wool*, which was formerly valued at 30 or 40 s. but is now in most Parts of *England* sold at 12 or 13 s. the Todd; and when Exported, because so common abroad, it yields not above a Third of its late Price, and must yet sink lower, while the *French* and *Dutch* Manufactures encrease, and ours decay; for if the *English Clothier* pays more for his Materials, than they do, he must quit his Trade, because he cannot live by it; and then our Neighbours must have our *Wool*, and we their *Cloth*, at what Rate they please.

Our *Woollens* formerly Exported, were reckon'd at near Two millions of Pounds *Sterl. per Ann.* and particularly what went to *France* at 600000 *l.* But the *French King* having set a Tax of 50 per Cent. upon our *Cloth*, has rendred this Trade impracticable there.

The *Dutch* have so prevailed upon us, that the *Clothes* we now export to *Hamburgh* are but of low Price, from 3 to 7 s. a Yard, and most of them undyed and undressed.

Our *East-land Trade* is sunk more; for heretofore this Company alone usually exported above 20000 Broad *Clothes*, 60000 *Kerfies*, and 40000 *Doubles* Yearly; but of late not above 4000 Broad *Clothes*, 5000 *Kerfies*, and 2000 *Doubles*. And now at *Dantzick*, our late great Staple, we sell so little, that it is not worth the naming. We trade to those Places with Treasure, whence we use to import much.

In *Swedland* the Natives have set up a Manufacture of their own *Course Woolls*; but are still, as well as *Denmark*, *Liesland*, and *Norway*, very much supplied by the *Dutch*, and impose greater Customs upon us for what we vend, and insist to have ready Money for what we have to buy; whereas formerly they barter'd for Commodity.

Our former Great Trade to *Muscovy* is in a manner lost: The *Dutch* now send 1500 Ships into the *Soundt*, and 40 to *Muscovy* yearly; and we send not above seven into the *Soundt* in a Year, and of those, but two laden with *Woollen Manufacture*; the other five with *Ballast*, and therefore are to buy their Forreign Lading with ready Money: And to *Muscovy* we hardly send two in three Years.

But what is still worse, we Import yearly much *Fine Cloth* from the *Dutch*, and *Stuffs* and *Druggets*, and *Hats* also, from the *French*; our own Trade in *English Hats* and *Stockings* much decaying, through the Exportation of *Wool*: So that our late Monopoly of *Woollens* is quite vanish'd, and our People starving at Home, or running into Forreign Countries after the *Wool*, leave their Wives and Children a Parish-Charge: whereof we may take one obvious Instance in the Town of *Reading*, where the late Number of *Clothiers* being about 160, are now reduc'd to 12 or 13; and the Poor so increas'd, that they cost the Town near 1000 *l.* a Year. Perhaps in some Towns, where Provisions are cheaper, the *Clothiers* may bear up

up somewhat better; but he that will examine into our *Clothing Towns*, will find the Trade decaying every where more or less, and hear the grievous Complaints of the *Clothiers* that continue in the Manufacture.

Thus the *French* and *Dutch* having long envied this great Manufacture of *England*, have of late made a mighty Progress towards its Extirpation, and thereby of the great Support of the *English* Nation; (Doubtless the *Wool-sacks* were plac'd in the Upper House of Parliament, to give us a Precaution of it.) Yet I question not, but if we did Manufacture all our *Wooll*, we might again monopolize the Trade of *Woollen Clothing*; And 'tis plain, that if we did Manufacture all our *English* and *Irish Wooll*, it would find vent in the World; since it is now all Manufactur'd in *England*, *France*, *Flanders*, and *Holland*, and finds vent in the aforesaid Mixtures of *Course Woolls*, whereby the Bulk of the Manufacture must be much increas'd.

Sir *Walter Rawleigh*, above sixty years since, proves, *That England in fifty five years time lost fifty five Millions of Pounds Sterling, by the Dutch Dying and Dressing our White Clothes*: What then may we imagine they get, and we lose, now, that they have our *Wooll* also?

Upon the whole Matter, as it is undeniable, that while our *Cloath* yields no rate abroad, our *Wooll* can bear no price at home, and therefore *Lands* must decrease in their Rents; so 'tis plain, the only way to make both valuable, and consequently to raise the Rents of *Lands*, is to hinder the Exportation of *Wooll*, without which our Neighbours can make very few pieces of *Cloath* of any considerable value; And 'tis demonstrable, it is the Interest of this Nation rather to burn yearly all the Wool not Manufactur'd in *England* and *Ireland*, and pay the Proprietors out of a *Publick Fund*, than to suffer it to be Exported into Forreign Countries.

'Tis therefore humbly offer'd as the most effectual expedient for preventing so great, and so general a Mischief for the future, that because 'tis found by experience, that *what is every ones business is no bodies business*, and therefore, the Exporters of *Wooll* are seldom taken notice of; a certain number of Commissioners be appointed by His Majesty to put the said Laws in due Execution: And that the *Clothiers*, whose immediate concern it is, be oblig'd by Act of Parliament to contribute, as most of them have already subscrib'd, toward the charge of such Officers as shall be employ'd to that purpose; which in a short time will certainly raise the price of their *Cloath* abroad, a Shilling for every Penny they lay out that way; and then, the value of our *Wooll*, and consequently of *Lands*, must naturally rise in proportion.

Much more might be added to this purpose, too long to be crowded into a single Sheet; which is ready with all Humility to be offer'd to a Committee of either House, when the Bill for the more effectual preventing the Exportation of *Wooll*, &c. shall be taken into Consideration.

